

We claim:

1. A conveyor belt comprising:

a plurality of link elements, each link element having a plurality of intermeshing extensions and at least one edge extension at a peripheral edge thereof, said plurality of intermeshing extensions forming receiving compartments adapted to receive intermeshing extensions of an adjacent link element, and including transverse rod openings; and

a plurality of pivot rods received in said transverse rod openings of said plurality of intermeshing extensions thereby interconnecting adjacent link elements together;

wherein said at least one edge extension of said plurality of link elements includes an entry aperture sized to allow insertion of a pivot rod through said at least one edge extension, and a protrusion that extends to block an entry aperture of an adjacent link element to retain a pivot rod that interlinks a pair of link elements other than said link element on which said protrusion is provided.

2. The conveyor belt of claim 1, wherein at least some of said transverse rod openings are slotted openings to allow said plurality of link elements of said conveyor belt to be collapsed together.

3. The conveyor belt of claim 2, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a receiving slot defined by an upper flange and a lower flange, said receiving slot being sized to receive a protrusion of an adjacent link element when said link elements are collapsed together.

4. The conveyor belt of claim 1, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a rod receiving compartment for receiving an end of a pivot rod therein.

5. The conveyor belt of claim 4, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a transverse obstruction that at least partially defines said rod receiving compartment.

6. The conveyor belt of claim 5, wherein said obstruction is a continuous divider.

7. The conveyor belt of claim 5, wherein said obstruction is at least one projection.

8. The conveyor belt of claim 7, wherein said projection is curved with a radius that is substantially the same as a radius of said pivot rod.

9. The conveyor belt of claim 3, wherein said protrusion is longer than a depth dimension of said receiving slot.

10. The conveyor belt of claim 1, further comprising a drive extension with a rod drive opening and a transverse slotted opening having a curved rod surface that receives a pivot rod therethrough.

11. A conveyor belt comprising:

a plurality of link elements, each link element including:

a plurality of intermeshing extensions that form receiving compartments adapted to receive intermeshing extensions of an adjacent link element, each of said plurality of intermeshing extensions including a transverse rod opening therethrough, at least some of said transverse rod openings being slotted openings to allow said plurality of link elements of said conveyor belt to be collapsed together; and

at least one edge extension at a peripheral edge of said link element, said at least one edge extension including a protrusion and a receiving slot sized to receive a protrusion of an adjacent link element to interlock adjacent link elements together when said link elements are collapsed together; and

a plurality of pivot rods received in said rod openings of said plurality of intermeshing extensions thereby interconnecting adjacent link elements together.

12. The conveyor belt of claim 11, wherein said receiving slot is defined by an upper flange and a lower flange.

13. The conveyor belt of claim 11, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes an entry aperture positioned in said receiving slot, said entry aperture being sized to allow insertion of a pivot rod through said at least one edge extension and said rod openings of a pair of adjacent link elements.

14. The conveyor belt of claim 11, wherein said protrusion extends in to said receiving slot to block an entry aperture of an adjacent link element to retain a pivot rod when adjacent link elements are collapsed together.

15. The conveyor belt of claim 14, wherein said pivot rod that is retained by said protrusion interconnects a pair of link elements other than said link element on which said protrusion is provided.

16. The conveyor belt of claim 11, wherein said at least one edge extension includes a rod receiving compartment for receiving an end of a pivot rod therein.

17. The conveyor belt of claim 16, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a transverse obstruction that at least partially defines said rod receiving compartment.

18. The conveyor belt of claim 17, wherein said obstruction is a continuous divider.

19. The conveyor belt of claim 17, wherein said obstruction is at least one projection.

20. The conveyor belt of claim 19, wherein said at least one projection is curved with a radius that is substantially the same as a radius of said pivot rod.

21. The conveyor belt of claim 11, wherein said protrusion is longer than a depth dimension of said receiving slot.

22. The conveyor belt of claim 11, further comprising a drive extension with a rod drive opening and a transverse slotted opening having a curved rod surface for receiving a pivot rod therethrough.

23. A conveyor belt comprising:

a plurality of link elements, each link element including:

a plurality of intermeshing extensions that form receiving compartments adapted to receive intermeshing extensions of an adjacent link element, each of said plurality of intermeshing extensions including a transverse rod opening therethrough, at least some of said transverse rod openings being slotted openings to allow said plurality of link elements of said conveyor belt to be collapsed together; and

at least one edge extension at a peripheral edge of said link element, said at least one edge extension including a protrusion that limits the extent to which said link elements of said peripheral edge of said conveyor belt are collapsed thereby defining a minimum turn radius of said conveyor belt; and

a plurality of pivot rods received in said rod openings of said plurality of intermeshing extensions thereby interconnecting adjacent link elements together.

24. The conveyor belt of claim 23, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a receiving slot sized to receive a protrusion of an adjacent link element when said link elements are collapsed together to interlock adjacent link elements together so as to resist tenting when said link elements are collapsed together.

25. The conveyor belt of claim 24, wherein said protrusion is longer than a depth dimension of said receiving slot.

26. A conveyor belt comprising:

a plurality of link elements, each link element including:

a plurality of intermeshing extensions that form receiving compartments adapted to receive intermeshing extensions of an adjacent link element, said plurality of intermeshing extensions including transverse rod openings therethrough, at least some of said transverse rod openings being slotted openings; and

at least one edge extension at a peripheral edge thereof, said at least one edge extension including a protrusion and an entry aperture sized to allow insertion of a pivot rod through said at least one edge extension; and

a plurality of pivot rods received in said rod openings of said plurality of intermeshing extensions thereby interconnecting adjacent link elements together;

wherein said protrusion of said at least one edge extension prevents removal of a pivot rod when said link elements are collapsed together.

27. The conveyor belt of claim 26, wherein said protrusion extends to block an entry aperture to retain said pivot rod, said pivot rod interconnecting a pair of link elements other than said link element on which said protrusion is provided.

28. The conveyor belt of claim 26, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a receiving slot defined by an upper flange and a lower flange, said receiving slot being sized to receive a protrusion of an adjacent link element when said link elements are collapsed together.

29. The conveyor belt of claim 26, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a rod receiving compartment for receiving an end of said pivot rod therein.

30. The conveyor belt of claim 26, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a transverse obstruction that at least partially defines said rod receiving compartment.

31. A conveyor belt comprising:

a plurality of link elements, each link element having a plurality of intermeshing extensions and at least one edge extension at a peripheral edge thereof, said plurality of intermeshing extensions forming receiving compartments adapted to receive intermeshing extensions of an adjacent link element, and including transverse rod openings; and

a plurality of pivot rods received in said transverse rod openings of said plurality of intermeshing extensions thereby interconnecting adjacent link elements together;

wherein said at least one edge extension of at least one of said plurality of link elements includes an entry aperture sized to allow insertion of a pivot rod through said at least one edge extension, and a transverse obstruction that at least

partially defines a rod receiving compartment for receiving an end of said pivot rod therein, said transverse obstruction preventing said end of said pivot rod from being forced into said rod receiving compartment from said entry aperture.

32. The conveyor belt of claim 31, wherein said obstruction is a continuous divider.

33. The conveyor belt of claim 31, wherein said obstruction is at least one projection.

34. The conveyor belt of claim 33, wherein said projection is curved with a radius that is substantially the same as a radius of said pivot rod.

35. The conveyor belt of claim 31, wherein said obstruction transversely extends widthwise across only a portion of the width of said at least one edge extension.

36. The conveyor belt of claim 31, wherein said obstruction transversely extends widthwise across the full width of said at least one edge extension.

37. The conveyor belt of claim 31, wherein said at least one of said plurality of link elements is adapted to be stretched transversely to allow said end of said pivot rod to clear said transverse obstruction so that said pivot rod is moveable into said receiving compartment.

38. The conveyor belt of claim 31, wherein at least some of said transverse rod openings are slotted openings to allow said plurality of link elements of said conveyor belt to be collapsed together.

39. The conveyor belt of claim 31, further including a protrusion positioned on said at least one edge extension that extends to block an entry aperture of an adjacent link element.

40. The conveyor belt of claim 39, wherein said at least one edge extension further includes a receiving slot defined by an upper flange and a lower flange, said receiving slot being sized to receive a protrusion of an adjacent link element when said link elements are collapsed together.

41. A conveyor belt comprising:

a plurality of link elements, each link element having a plurality of intermeshing extensions and at least one edge extension at a peripheral edge thereof, said plurality of intermeshing extensions forming receiving compartments adapted to receive intermeshing extensions of an adjacent link element, and including transverse rod openings, said transverse rod openings of at least some of said plurality of intermeshing extensions being slots; and

a plurality of pivot rods received in said transverse rod openings of said plurality of intermeshing extensions thereby interconnecting adjacent link elements together;

wherein said at least one edge extension of at least one of said plurality of link elements includes an entry aperture sized to allow insertion of a pivot rod through said at least one edge extension, and a transverse obstruction that at least partially defines a rod receiving compartment for receiving an end of said pivot rod therein, said rod receiving compartment being larger than said end of said pivot rod to allow said end of said pivot rod to be displaced therein.

42. A method of assembling a conveyor belt comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of link elements, each link element having a plurality of intermeshing extensions with transverse rod openings, and at least



one edge extension at a peripheral edge thereof, said at least one edge extension including an entry aperture and a transverse obstruction that at least partially defines a rod receiving compartment;

providing a plurality of pivot rods;

intermeshing a pair of adjacent link elements together;

inserting a pivot rod through said entry aperture of one of said intermeshed pair of link elements and through said transverse rod openings of said intermeshed pair of link elements to thereby interconnect said intermeshed pair of link elements together;

transversely stretching said intermeshed pair of link elements to allow an end of said pivot rod to clear said transverse obstruction; and

moving said end of said pivot rod into said receiving compartment.

43. The method of claim 42, further including the step of releasing said stretched intermeshed pair of link elements to allow said pair of link elements to return to normal size.

44. The method of claim 42, wherein said obstruction is a continuous divider.

45. The method of claim 42, wherein said obstruction is at least one projection.